

**Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting
held on Monday 2nd February 2026**

Present:

Joe Deane	(JD)	Councillor
Robin Morley	(RM)	Councillor
Sandra Cosier	(SC)	Councillor & District Councillor
Trudi Gasser	(TG)	Parish Clerk

In Attendance:

Dan Levy	(DL)	County Councillor
Steve Cosier	(SCo)	District Councillor
9 Members of the public		

MIN REF	ITEM
26/001	<p>APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE</p> <p>Keith Hickson (KH) Chair Jim Coleman (JC) Councillor Geoff Webster (GW) Vice-Chair</p> <p>The meeting was chaired by SC in the absence of the Chair and Vice-Chair.</p>
26/002	<p>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST</p> <p>No Declarations made.</p>
26/003	<p>APPROVAL OF MINUTES</p> <p>Minutes Parish Council Meeting of the 3rd December 2025 approved for publication.</p> <p>One amendment was required to the date on the minutes which was incorrect – the minutes will be signed at the next meeting.</p>
26/004	<p>MATTERS ARISING</p> <p>25/105: SC had contacted Methodist Church regarding an additional Defibrillator being installed there - still waiting a reply.</p> <p>25/151: The additional waste bin had been installed on New Road.</p>
26/005	<p>COUNTY & DISTRICT COUNCILLOR REPORTS</p> <p>See attached appendix for full reports.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dan Levy, County Councillor, OCC. • Steve Cosier & Sandra Cosier, District Councillors, WODC.
26/006	<p>QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC</p> <p><i>Q. The RBL are holding an event in the Guardroom and would like access to the tower – do the PC have keys to the tower?</i></p> <p>The PC confirmed they don't have the keys and the tower is managed by Ground Solutions. RBL will contact Ground Solutions.</p> <p><i>Q. When will the PC arrange for the trees to be pruned and the hedge planted in the</i></p>

	<p><i>gaps on the Green?</i></p> <p>TG to check with Robin when the trimming would be carried out and KH to report at the next meeting regarding the trees ordered and replacement hedging.</p> <p><i>Q. Update on the closed footpath on Dix Pit – the action group had met with Savills (All Soul's agents) and the tenants – it was asked whether the PC would write a letter of support and whether the PC would supply the OGR free of charge for future meetings?</i></p> <p>The PC confirmed they would support the group by arranging for KH to write a letter of support as Chair of the PC.</p> <p>JD proposed that the OGR is provided up to 3 times a month at times a month, subject to availability. SC seconded, all were in favour. TG asked the group representative to supply potential dates for meetings so availability could be confirmed.</p> <p><i>Q. It was asked whether any progress had been made regarding the Brook on Blackditch needs clearing.</i></p> <p>JC, who is progressing, was not at the meeting, an update is to follow at the next meeting.</p> <p><i>Q. It was reported that the grass verges on The Green were being damaged by the dustbin lorries.</i></p> <p>SCo volunteered to follow up with Ubico.</p>
<p>26/007</p>	<p>PLANNING: Applications No applications were received.</p> <p>PLANNING: Neighbourhood Plan No update due to the absence of KH.</p>
<p>26/008</p>	<p>ROADS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Speed Signs The sign had been installed in Sutton. • Speedwatch The group shared details of their proposal to OCC for reducing speeding vehicles on the B4449 through Sutton, which included extending the 30mph zone and installing chicane/pinch points in the road. The PC asked that the group also include a proposal for the entrance to Stanton Harcourt by the cemetery. All the details for the VAS signs are to be provided to the group. • Weight Restriction Nothing to report.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pot Holes KH to provide an update at the next meeting.
26/009	<p>MAINTENANCE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tree trimming is required (as discussed in the public session). • The bus shelter requires repair to the ceiling, which is a simple fix by John Woodward. • Some graves at the cemetery require topping up – TG to draft a notice for the noticeboard at the cemetery outlining the works.
26/010	<p>VILLAGE VOICE</p> <p>A fantastic new look for the first edition, which is now available as a ‘flippable’ version in addition to the hard copy delivery.</p> <p>SC to provide copy for the March issue.</p>
26/011	<p>GUARDROOM</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The heating issue continues – GW currently working toward a solution to make the heating automated from the bookings calendar. • The curtain had been hung • A wall clock had been installed. • RM proposed that the PC accept John Woodward’s quotation of a maximum of £600 to install a fence. SC seconded, all in favour.
26/012	<p>VILLAGE HALL</p> <p>A report had been received form the Committee:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Renewal of curtains and blinds was almost complete • A new heater had been installed in the ladies’ loo, where the underfloor heating had failed • A report had been received of damage to the wall of a neighbouring property in the car park presumably by a user of the hall – the clerks details had been passed on toe possibly make an insurance claim for the damage.
26/013	<p>CORRESPONDENCE</p> <p>A report had been received that one of the 20mph signs in Sutton was missing – this had now been resolved.</p>
26/014	<p>ANY OTHER BUSINESS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nothing to report
26/015	<p>NEXT MEETING</p> <p>7.30pm on Monday 2nd March 2026 in the Old Guardroom</p>

Signed

Date

Mobile phone reception in rural areas:

At a recent Full Council meeting, I received overwhelming support for a motion calling for urgent action to address the mobile connectivity issues affecting our rural communities.

I know that mobile coverage across West Oxfordshire remains deeply inconsistent. While our larger towns: Witney, Carterton, Chipping Norton, Bampton, Charlbury, Eynsham, and Woodstock benefit from good levels of service, the situation in surrounding villages and hamlets is far more concerning. Twenty-five of our tier-five settlements are officially classified as “total not-spots,” meaning residents have no mobile signal whatsoever.

The lack of reliable mobile coverage has serious implications for those living and working in rural areas; Farmers operating in remote fields, parents walking children to school, or residents caring for vulnerable family members, may find themselves unable to use a mobile phone when it is most needed. This issue becomes even more pressing as we approach the national switch-off of copper landlines on 31 January 2027. The replacement digital (VoIP) lines rely on electricity, and industry-standard battery backups last between one and seven hours. In West Oxfordshire, where storms can leave communities without power for days, the mobile phone becomes the only remaining lifeline.

According to the NFU, 80% of rural businesses identify connectivity as their primary barrier to growth. For our farmers, tourism operators, and independent traders to thrive, they must be able to operate modern, efficient businesses without being constrained by unreliable mobile coverage.

For several years, we were told that the mobile industry's Shared Rural Network would resolve these issues. However, delivery has fallen far short of expectations, and the major networks have not provided the transparency required to assess progress.

I believe that no resident in my ward should be left without the ability to use the mobile network. As a council we will continue pressing the government and mobile operators to deliver the infrastructure our communities deserve.

Cllr Steve Cosier

Local Elections 2026:

I would like to update residents on the position regarding the upcoming 2026 local elections in West Oxfordshire. At the end of last year, on 18 December 2025, the government wrote to all councils with elections scheduled for May 2026. The letter offered councils the option to request a postponement of their elections if they believed delaying the vote would free up essential capacity to support local government reorganisation. Any council wishing to request a postponement was asked to respond by 15 January 2026.

West Oxfordshire District Council has carefully considered this invitation and has confirmed that **we will not be requesting a postponement**. This means that **local elections in West Oxfordshire will proceed as normal on Thursday 7 May 2026**.

The Leader of the Council, Councillor Andy Graham, has explained that the council has undertaken the necessary due diligence to assess whether there was any practical reason to delay the election. The conclusion was clear: West Oxfordshire is a well-run authority, already at an advanced stage of preparation for the May elections. While local government reorganisation will require significant work, this is being managed effectively in partnership with neighbouring authorities.

I believe that Local elections are a vital part of our democratic system, and it is important that residents continue to have the opportunity to make their voices heard. I encourage all residents to take part in the elections in May.

Cllr Sandra Cosier

Sewage Infrastructure and New Development:

West Oxfordshire District Council is taking firm action to ensure sewage infrastructure keeps pace with new housing. Ongoing capacity issues, repeated sewage spills, and long-term underinvestment in the wastewater network mean stronger safeguards are essential.

To address this, the Council is applying **Grampian planning conditions** to developments in areas where the sewage system cannot currently cope. These conditions prevent new homes from being occupied until the required upgrades are completed and operational. Thames Water is consulted on each case, and the necessary improvements are identified in advance.

We all now that the district's sewage network is under significant strain. Many of Thames Water's 20-treatment works are operating beyond capacity, leading to thousands of hours of sewage discharges each year. Ageing pipes, overloaded pumping stations, and groundwater infiltration contribute to sewage flooding in gardens, streets, and communal areas. This situation is unacceptable, and the Council continues to press Thames Water and national regulators for urgent investment and long-term solutions.

At present, **just under 1,000 homes** with planning permission or under construction cannot be occupied until infrastructure upgrades are secured. These measures are not about blocking development; they ensure new homes are safe, sustainable, and properly serviced.

The Council will continue using all available planning powers to protect residents, safeguard the environment, and ensure that new development is supported by the infrastructure our communities deserve.

Cllr Sandra Cosier

Thank you for taking the time to read this report. If you would like to discuss any of the issues raised, or you require help with a council matter please contact us.

Best wishes

Sandra and Steve

Sandra.cosier@westoxon.gov.uk

Steve.cosier@westoxon.gov.uk

County Councillor report, Dan Levy
Stanton Harcourt Parish Council
2 February 2026

Even though it is February, can I wish councillors and residents a Happy New Year as this is the first parish council meeting of 2026.

No quiet start to the new year. There is lots going on.

Budget

The government has changed the way funding for local government is arranged and produced a 3 year settlement, announced just before Christmas Eve. All the grants have been bundled into one package, the government has determined what the total spend of local authorities should be, and used a complicated algorithm to apportion that around the country.

The very brief version is that we have been told to increase Council Tax by 4.99% each year, and the amount of money coming from central government is being reduced. Effectively, money is being redistributed away from the county and Council Tax is no longer a local tax. The reduction in funding amounts to about £24m.

We face a challenging few years. Austerity is back again. The County Council will set its budget on 10 February. The budget for 26-27 will balance via reductions in the money kept aside for things like wage inflation, assumptions about interest on cash balances and some small cuts to services.

Future years will be extremely challenging.

Fire Service

The consultation on reshaping the Oxfordshire Fire and Rescue Service to meet the demands of the county was extended to the end of January. Thank you to the Eynsham parish council for hosting the recent public meeting, at which the chief fire officer, residents and the FBU all had their say.

I am not sure it has been made sufficiently clear that any closures of Eynsham and Woodstock could not happen until 2029 at the earliest, if at all, since they rely on building a new fire station north of Oxford. The objective is to ensure that shift patterns and locations of fire fighters correspond to where they are most needed. There are different populations, different equipment, and different demands on the fire service (mainly driven by a large reduction in the number and timing of fires). If the proposals don't achieve those improvements then they won't happen - and the consultation is designed to test that.

Elections and Local Government Reform.

WODC elections will go ahead in May. The Government asked WODC and OCC if they want to postpone elections given upcoming local government reform. WODC has declined to ask for such a thing.

The government has indicated that the statutory consultation on local government reform will start in February. You will get a say on whether we have one, two or three local authorities in Oxfordshire. Whether government, which has the say, will listen is open to doubt.

Household Waste and Recycling sites.

A booking system has been introduced to the household waste sites, including Dix pit. It went live

last week. The objective is a) to enable OCC to charge people from outside the County for using sites, in line with what all the neighbouring authorities do; b) to prevent trade waste being unlawfully dumped at HWRCs; c) to reduce queuing at the sites, particularly while the City site, Redbridge, is shut for maintenance.

<https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/waste-and-recycling/household-waste/household-waste-recycling-centres/book-recycling-centre-visit>

All the neighbouring authorities to Oxfordshire have a booking system. There is no evidence that their sites are less well used or that there is increased fly-tipping compared with Oxfordshire.

I would welcome feedback from people who use the system.

Buses

The S2, which serves the Evenlode on the Oxford to Cheltenham route is being replaced by the X52. This will have a very similar service, but will be run by Pulhams rather than Stagecoach. There will be limited stops between Witney and Oxford – but no difference for Eynsham.

The free buses from Park and Rides will remain in place for a few more months. It has been very successful in encouraging bus use. Bus use is up and car congestion down in the city, as planned.

The S1, E1, H2 and buses to Standlake and Hanborough remain as they were and the WOCT route from Stanton Harcourt.

Roads

It is the time of year when potholes develop fastest. As they do every year. Wet, followed by ice, followed by wet. Because there is insufficient money to do more than repairs in most places, potholes will appear wherever there are cracks. If we had the money from central government to do full resurfacing then this would happen less frequently. Unfortunately government is not funding road maintenance properly. The County Council has put £60 million above the government grant into roads, and has been recognised as “mid table” amber in the recent government audit. We have restored annual gulley clearing and will be putting £2m capital into rebuilding broken gullies in the upcoming budget.

Please do report potholes on FixmyStreet.

As ever you can get hold of me at dan.levy@oxfordshire.gov.uk